

Mineral Industry Surveys

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BISMUTH IN THE FIRST QUARTER 2000

Total bismuth consumption in the United States decreased about 7%, to 498 metric tons during the first quarter of 2000, when compared to the fourth quarter of 1999. Bismuth alloy consumption decreased 7%, chemical uses decreased 8%, and metallurgical additives consumption decreased 1%. However, total consumption for the first quarter increased 1% compared to the first quarter of 1999.

The New York dealer price for bismuth, as published in Platt's Metals Week, began the quarter at \$4.30 per pound, fell during January and February to \$3.88 per pound, rose to \$4.13 per pound by the middle of March, but declined again to \$3.93 per pound by the end of the quarter.

On February 28, 2000, the Mexican government lifted restrictions on production by Industrias Peñoles, S.A., that had been effected to decrease lead pollution. As a result, Peñoles is expected to return to full capacity for bismuth production, about 1,100 tons, nearly twice the 600 tons produced in 1999 (Metal Bulletin, 2000). The decrease in bismuth production at Peñoles helped maintain the bismuth price rally in 1999; thus, despite steady world demand, anticipation of a return to full production at the Peñoles facility, the world's largest bismuth plant, is expected

to restrain price increases (Metal Bulletin, 1999). Moreover, renewed availability of low-priced bismuth from China further reduces support for a price rise (Mining Journal, 2000).

Domestic imports for the first quarter reached 478 tons, a decrease of 15% compared to the fourth quarter of 1999, but an increase of 1% compared to the first quarter of last year. If the first quarter import rate continued all year, imports would be about 1,900 tons, a 9% decrease compared to 1999.

Update

The New York dealer price for bismuth continued to fall, and by mid June it reached \$3.58 per pound.

References Cited

- Metal Bulletin, 1999, Peñoles to ramp up Pb, Bi output in early 2000: Metal Bulletin, no. 8433, December 9, p. 8.
———2000, Environmental agency ends pollution restrictions at Peñoles: Metal Bulletin, no. 8455, March 2, p. 5.
Mining Journal, 2000, Minors march halted: Mining Journal, v. 334, no. 8577, April 7, p. 273.

TABLE 1
SALIENT BISMUTH STATISTICS 1/

(Kilograms, unless otherwise specified)

	1999 p/	2000 First quarter
Consumption	1,980,000	498,000
Exports 2/	257,000	134,000
Imports for consumption	2,110,000	478,000
Price per pound, dealer, end of period	\$4.30	\$3.93
Stocks, end of period, consumer	130,000	129,000

p/ Preliminary.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits.

2/ Comprises bismuth metal and the bismuth content of alloys and waste and scrap.

TABLE 2
BISMUTH METAL CONSUMED IN THE UNITED STATES, BY USE 1/

(Kilograms)

Use	1999 p/	2000 First quarter
Chemicals 2/	855,000	216,000
Bismuth alloys	756,000	193,000
Metallurgical additives	340,000	81,400
Other	31,000	7,000
Total	1,980,000	498,000

p/ Preliminary.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ Includes industrial and laboratory chemicals, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF BISMUTH METAL , BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms)

Country	1999			2000			
	Year	December	Fourth quarter	January	February	March	First quarter
Bahamas, The	735	--	--	--	--	--	--
Belgium	742,000	35,400	195,000	26,200	55,000	86,600	168,000
Canada	108,000	5,190	32,800	24,900	25,200	4,720	54,700
China	556,000	66,900	159,000	9,520	10,400	30,100	50,000
Germany	1,490	--	--	600	67	--	667
Italy	400	--	--	--	--	--	--
Japan	3,260	500	1,800	500	500	500	1,500
Mexico	277,000	50,100	95,700	19,100	19,800	53,700	92,600
Netherlands	19,500	--	--	165	--	--	165
Peru	6,810	--	--	--	20,400	--	20,400
Spain	200	--	--	--	--	--	--
Switzerland	86	--	--	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	391,000	24,100	76,800	18,000	34,600	37,000	89,600
Total	2,110,000	182,000	561,000	99,000	166,000	213,000	478,000

-- Zero.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF BISMUTH METAL, ALLOYS, AND WASTE AND SCRAP, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms, metal content)

Country	1999			2000			
	Year	December	Fourth quarter	January	February	March	First quarter
Australia	41	--	--	--	--	--	--
Belgium	83,400	19,500	38,500	--	--	775	775
Canada	87,700	4,810	10,500	5,140	1,000	7,210	13,400
Dominican Republic	1,240	201	288	74	--	74	148
Germany	19,000	18,900	18,900	--	18,300	28,700	47,000
Hong Kong	7,900	112	173	141	87	--	228
Ireland	94	--	--	--	--	--	--
Korea, Republic of	--	--	--	--	--	33,700	33,700
Malaysia	919	--	--	--	--	--	--
Mexico	29,900	7,630	19,200	4,630	11,900	8,510	25,000
New Zealand	50	--	--	--	--	--	--
Norway	--	--	--	--	20	--	20
Singapore	1,240	--	109	69	--	--	69
Taiwan	46	--	--	--	--	510	510
Trinidad and Tobago	15,900	--	5,220	13,100	--	--	13,100
United Kingdom	8,230	--	--	--	6	--	6
Venezuela	947	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	257,000	51,200	92,900	23,200	31,300	79,500	134,000

-- Zero.

1/ Data are rounded to no more than three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.